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ABSTRACT

Noting demographic and socio-political shifts in Europe, this paper discusses challenges facing early childhood education in providing children with sufficient competence to cope successfully with discontinuities in their lives caused by rapidly changing social conditions and family structure. The paper outlines some contextual conditions which need to be considered when defining quality education, then focuses on three aspects of European early childhood education of central importance in terms of social integration: social integration of children with special needs, intercultural education as a reality in Europe, and continuities versus discontinuities, or coping with transitions. The educational-political consequences of multicultural education are outlined, including official recognition of multicultural groups, the right to kindergarten education for all children, and the necessity intercultural education and teacher training. The paper also discusses current trends in daycare in Europe, outlining the different types of institutions, creating networks between institutions, training staff, and political decisions regarding the relationship between state regulation and regional profiles. (JPB)

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The socializing role of Early Childhood Development and Education (ECD) in the 21th century

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During the last decades, important demographic changes have taken place within the European Union (EU), and particularly since the late Eighties there has been evidence of a socio-political shift, especially affecting the lives of children. This does not only lead to structural and qualitative changes within the family system, but also entails far-reaching consequences for children's living conditions in Europe. Recently, sociological and family-orientated psychological studies have classified these changes as consequences of a long process of individualization and of pluralization, which started more than 100 years ago. The economic and political development in the EU on the one hand and the collapse of communism ensued by a post-totalitarian development in Eastern Europe on the other hand added a political dimension to this change.

When analysing the development of the family system after World War II, one notices that there have been both structural and qualitative changes. The phenomenon of increasing individualization gave rise to a pluralization of family form's, in which children grow up today. Demographically, the importance of extended families as a background for the development and socialization of infants has dwindled. New family forms have emerged: small families, families organized non-traditionally, families with unmarried partners, one-parent families and families with divorced or remarried partners. Besides, children grow up under social parenthood or in families with partners of

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the same sex [2] [3].

However, we are not only confronted with different forms of families today. More and more children are affected by changes within the family system, for example by their parents' separation, divorce or remarriage. Today about 33% of all children are facing such changes within their family. About one out of three children will not spend its childhood with its natural parents, but will lose contact with one parent (usually its father) during adolescence[4]. Regarding the aspect of quality in the parent-child-rela

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2 From a demographic point of view we are witnessing a rise in average life expectancy in all EU-countries. To give an example, life expectancy rose by 11 years for Portuguese women and by 10 years for Portuguese men between 1960 and 1990 and by 9 years for Greek women, by 8 years for Greek men. According to UN-prognoses, in 2025, 28 per cent of women and 19% of men will be older than 80 years. This development is paralleled by a rise in the age of getting married and of giving birth for the first time. This generative problem has affected all EU-countries to such an extent that probably the status quo of the population rate cannot be maintained and the population rate will even decrease more dramatically in the next thirty years. The countries most severely affected by this problem are the Mediterranean countries, Italy with 1.2 children per woman in 1992, Greece with 1.3 children in 1990, and Spain with 1.2 in 1992.

3 With life expectancy rising and birth rate declining the demographic development in Europe is expected to be dramatic: while in the year 1960 the populations proportion of children under the age of 15 ranged between 21.1% to 41.7% in different European countries, by the year 2025 it is predicted to range between only 14.1% and 21.3 %. Besides, we are generally witnessing a growing percentage of children born out of wedlock in almost all European countries. Usually only a small percentage of these children grow up with their natural parents - for a lot of children the natural father is substituted by a social one. The decreasing birth rate and the rising average life expectancy we are witnessing will lead to a demographic development, characterized by an increase in vertical and a decline in horizontal complexity.

4 Looking at biographies of families there is evidence of changes responsible for increasing discontinuities in the process of family development. This can be exemplified very well by analysing separation, divorce and remarriage. The problem of children affected by their parents' divorce varies according to three different regions in Europe: the divorce rate in the Mediterranean countries is 10-20 percent, in the Central European countries it amounts to 30-40 % and in Northern Europe about 40-50% of all marriages are divorced. Divorce, one-parent families, remarriage and (in a lot of cases) repeated divorce, represent transitions in the process of family development, the consequences of which have not yet been studied sufficiently. With a total divorce rate of 33.7 % in 1995 in Germany, at present about every third marriage gets divorced. In 1995 in about 52.4% of all cases children under age were affected. A significant number of children have to cope with integrating different family forms and have to face living with other persons than their natural parents until they become off age. More than 21 % of children born in the Old and more than 30% of the children born in the New German Federal States today, will not spend their childhood with both parents. During their adolescence their family system will collapse, which will be detrimental to the relationship to at least one parent (as a rule to the father).

tionship we are witnessing changes in the parents' educational concepts[5], in the parent-child-relationship role distribution of fathers and mothers[6], in the self-concept of partners[7], and last but not least a change in the meaning children have for their parents.

But also other strains, which families have to endure, are presently discussed in public. This includes problems of domestic violence against women and children, the effects of unemployment on family members as well as child abuse, neglect and sexual abuse of children.

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5 As to parents' concepts of education, studies conducted in the Eighties report on changes as far as educational aims are concerned. There appears to be a decline of educational aims implying conventionality and conformity; the educational aims are rather orientated towards individuality and critical autonomy.

6 Besides this decisive change in educational aims, there have been changes in the parent-child relationship. In the countries of the European Union, children have almost entirely lost their economic and socio-normative function. Instead, children primarily have a psychological function and make their parents' lives more meaningful. At the same time (as far as Germany is concerned) 61% of the interviewed persons thought, having children caused economic strain and 71% (mostly mothers) have experienced conflict in coordinating family and job. The different meaning children have for their parents nowadays has also its effects on the parent-child-relationship. As nowadays parents pay more attention to their children's demands of autonomy, the parent-child-relationship takes on more and more the quality of partnership. The educational relationship grows into an interactional relationship, which leads on the one hand to a more child-centered situation and on the other hand to a weakening of the partner system (Schütze 1988).

7 First of all, women have a new self-consept. The most striking indicator of this change is that an increasing number of women are employed. Besides, men and women have revised their attitude towards female participation in the labour market enormously. In a representative sample of respondents of a German study of 1991 about 80% of the interviewed persons supported full-time occupation of both partners, 17 % supported part-time occupation of one partner and only 3 % were against female occupation. In Germany in 1995 about 75% of all mothers aged 15-64 had a job, about half of them had a part-time job. The smaller the number of children in a family and the older the youngest child, the higher was the percentage of mothers having a job. On the whole, nowadays women enter the job market later that their mothers did, yet a higher percentage of them keep their job during the most intensive years of family life. In 1995 the proportion of couples with both partners employed amounted to 37 % for families with children aged under three years, to 48.1% for children between 3 and 5 years and to 61.3% for children older than six years.

Not only within the family system but also regarding the family context, the living conditions of children have changed: More and more women face the problem of coordinating family and work requirements, a problem, which certainly affects their children as well. Poverty, social exclusion, increasing mobility, migration, cultural and lingual diversity are some more factors to be mentioned influencing childrens' living conditions.

On this background one can design a scenario for families, characterized by a pluralization of ways of life, by discontinuity in their family development and by the need to cope with strains resulting from normative and non-normative biographical events. The need to cope is crucial for children in families.

These societal trends are not new. But what is new, I think, is the rapidity, with which this process has progressed since the early Eighties. This process (favoured by new information and communication networks) releases individuals gradually from traditional patterns, which seemed to be stable. It also confronts individuals with social regulations becoming more and more confusing. An important question for all of us today is how, and under what conditions, early childhood education can be organized, to provide children with sufficient competence to cope successfully with discontinuites in their lives.

Conceptualization of quality of education has repeatedly studies been discussed and a number of have been stimulated. Thus, in the Nineties we witness a lively discussion focussing on this topic. However, no matter from which point of view the definition of quality is approached, it will become clear, that contextual and ecological factors and the topic of social integration have not been sufficiently taken into account.

When defining quality, neither the relativist perspective nor concepts emphasizing the dynamics of the conception of quality, nor processual-structural models, have adequately considered the meaning of contextual conditions. These approaches also have not considered with the necessary sensitivity the special problems of maladjusted children, of children with special needs and the social integrative function of early childhood education in general.

That is why I should like to point out some aspects, which should be given much more weight than in the past:

Even in Europe poverty represents the central risk factor for the development of a great number of children. It is associated with a number of other problems like a higher rate of infant mortality, low birth weight, serious diseases, injuries and death (Klerman, 1991)[8].

Related to poverty is the topic of social exclusion by which not only adults but also more and more children in Europe are affected. I cannot understand why in Germany and some other European countries this important topic has been excluded from discussion up to now[9].

The effects of separation and divorce on children have not been sufficiently researched up to the present day in the European countries[10], compared to research in the U.S.

Due to these changes of family structures and relationships children and infants have to integrate disparate family settings and they have to adapt to stepparents, when the parent with custody remarries. They might have to adopt a new role in a new constellation of brothers and sisters. There is rare information available of how children cope with these transitions in the family developmental process and which competen-

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8 Extensive studies of the last five years have shown the effects of poverty on children: For poor children there is a risk of a delay in their development and they show considerable intellectual deficits in their preschool years. Their progress at school is slower and their schoolcareer is frequently ended by dropping out (Mc Lanahan et.al., 1991; Ramey & Campbell, 1991). They show a high extent of socio-emotional behaviour problems including fear, social retreat, aggression and delinquency and last but least low self-esteem and self-confidence. (Mc Loyd, 1991). James Garbarino pointed out in 1992 that such problems in adolesence can spill over to the level of society in the shape of juvenile delinquency, teenager pregnancy and school drop outs.

9 We should turn our attention to Romanian children, to children of political immigrants, to children of German descendants emigrating from Eastern Europe, to children of migrant families, but also to German children of economically deprived families, to children of families with one parent in prison and to children of Aids victims. We have to ask critically, whether our own contributions to the definiton of quality can meet the needs of these children.

10 Related questions about the development of children in different settings of family organization (unmarried mothers, long-term relationships without marriage, one-parent families, stepfamilies etc.) represent a field of research which until now has been neglected in some European countries, although its importance has repeatedly been emphasized in international research literature.

ces we should teach these children in such situations.

Due to increasing mobility, Europe is developing into a remarkable economic market, which leads to a stronger geographic mobility within the EU, which also increasingly affects children. Our knowledge about the effects of mobility on children's development is still rather limited[11].

In consegnence of a different meaning for parents and as the relationship between children and parents has changed, it is children's autonomy that is being emphasized today. Consequently, children individualize and behave within pedagogical settings in ways which cause more and more problems for educators and teachers. In view of pedagogial settings unable to cope with autonomous children, the question becomes more and more urgent whether our concepts of education are still appropriate.

But also regarding the macro-level perspective, childrens' autonomy is more and more respected: Childhood Education Research has initiated developments emphasizing the child's autonomy by defining children as an independent social group beside adults and senior citizens. At a legal level, the UN-Convention on Children's Rights declares the child as subject in international law, which legally strenghtens children's claim to autonomy. It has also favoured amendments in custody and family law.

In spite of praiseworthy attempts in Europe, it should not escape our attention that at the level of the European Union, political action in favour of children is still in its infancy. Often issues connected with Children's Rights are not treated as part of political action in favour of children, but as part of political action concerned with women's employment[12].

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11 Until now Early Childhood Education has failed to react adequately to such developments and to analyse whether current concepts of education are still up to date. In connection with this strong mobility we need to update our concepts of education as far as cultural openmindedness is concerned. We also need to ask how cultural openmindedness can be defined as a new dimension of quality of education.

12 This happens due to unclear areas of responsibility and due to attempts to contain the Children's Rights Movement. A good example is the work of the "Childcare Network" of the Commission of the European Union, in which daycare for infants in Europe is considered as part of the political action in favour of women's employment. But also at a national level, there are approaches to the politican action in favour of children, neglecting, or even ignoring, the perspective of children. To give an example, in Germany by law, every child is entitled to go to kindergarten, however, this measure was primarily introduced in order to support pregnant women and to prevent abortion. It was not introduced in order to endow children with the right of adequate education, even though

Recently Children's Rights have become a topic of interest in the United States and England. Nevertheless the discussion on children's rights is still at its very beginning, although the legal framework for children becomes more and more important and there is a growing tendency to define the relationship between adults and children in legal terms of international standard.

Having tried to outline some contextual conditions which need to be considered when defining quality of education, I should now like to focus on three topics in particular, which in my opinion are very important aspects in early childhood education in Europe and which are of central importance in terms of social integration: (a) Social integration of children with special needs, (b) intercultural education as a reality in Europe, and (c) Continuities versus discontinuities, or coping with transitions.

a) Social integration of children with special needs

Dealing with the problem of the protection and support of children who are threatened by biological and psychosocial risks, there are three aspects which are of special importance for all measures to be taken in this field: (1) the prevention of discrimination and exclusion, i.e. applying the so-called "principle of normalisation" [13]; (2) the consideration of modern disease models, as they have been developed within the framework of "Developmental Psychopathology" (Achenbach 1990; Kazdin, 1989)[14]

Germany was one of the first countries in the world to summon a commission for children in parliament.

[13] There has been a tremendous change in the view of experts but also in public awareness regarding the question of how to help children who are developmentally at risk. While in the past support programmes frequently excluded children from regular educational and daycare settings, in the last two or three decades non-discriminating, integrative forms of support have increasingly emerged. Today the prevailing principle is the so-called "principle of normalisation", according to which it is not allowed that the support for handicapped children or for children threatened by the risk of handicap restricts them more than absolutely necessary in their normal procedures of life (World Conference on Special Needs Education, 1994).

[14] Characteristics of this model are:

- complex, multicausal explanatory models: Genesis and manifestation of disturbances are conceived as a result of the concurrence of genetic, constitutional, psychological, sociological and ecological influences.

and (3) an empirical approach, i.e. the theoretical concepts and the practical work of agencies concerned with this field should be made more accessible for empirical evaluation and research than they have been until now[15].

Reintegration of resources: In all western countries a widespread network of social, educational, psychological and medical support programmes for children with special needs has been built up during the last decades. The topical focus and organisational development of the systems were predominantly directed by factors immanent in the systems. Special importance was attached to a strong specialization of support programmes and a strong consideration of the specific interior perspective of each of the services (mode of financing, affiliation to disciplines or political-administrative entities).

- the focus on the factor "development": the process of development provides the decisive links between genetic disposition and environmenal influences, between sociological and psychological, physical and psychic factors.

- the concept of so-called factors of risk and factors of protection: Factors of risk comprise all the biological, psychological, social and evolutionary influences, which impede or threaten a "normal" or "sane/healthy" development and enhance the probablity of maldevelopments. Factors of protection according to a comprehesive definition are for all of those conditions which in a broad sense promote development, and according to a narrow definition they are all of those conditions which prevent the development of a disturbance under potential aggravating circumstances. There is a dynamic interplay between these two spheres of influence: The development of a disturbance is the more likely the higher the number of aggravating factors in relation to the number of protective factors and conditions promoting development.

- Taking a longitudinal perspective, possibly including the entire life span. It is a prerequisite for (1) describing and evaluating deviation or pathology especially on the background of the patterns of behaviour and norms characteristic of each developmental stage, and (2) it takes into account that the developmental process is marked by progressing processes of adaptation and of transformation of behaviour. It is more reliable to predict psychopathological phenomena, e.g. in adolescence, on the basis of failure in the coping with age-related developmental tasks than on the basis of phenotypically similar patterns in earlier developmental stages.

[15] This refers to ensuring the quality of the work of support institutions and the objectivization of the effects of special forms of intervention, but it also refers to building up a supply network in general: Remschmidt (1990) suggests that supply networks for children at risk and psychically disturbed children, which are developed on the basis of empirical results rather than on the basis of theoretical concepts, are required.

In the interest of the children at risk and their families in the future it will be essential to widen the view to a perspective, which has so far been only limited to single subsystems and to face the situation as a whole (Specht, 1990). In this context on the one hand it is important for interventions to come up to the multicausal nature of risks, on the other hand it is vital to ensure the accessibility of support programmes for all groups concerned, especially socially disadvantaged groups[16].

Cooperation between regular institutions and professional therapeutical services: For the reintegration of support programmes it is the cooperation between regular institutions like schools or day care institutions for children on the one hand and professional therapeutical services on the other hand that is extremely important. After a long period of an increasing segregation of general educational (and/or daycare) systems and specific support programmes there is a need to bring these two types of systems closer together once again[17].

Improvement of Early Diagnosis: Epidemiological studies give evidence that numerous developmental risks and developmental disturbances were not treated, because parents or educators did not recognize them at all or not in time (Koot & Verhust, 1992). Therefore the improvement of measures of early diagnosis is of vital importance in the

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[16] This can be achieved by:

- an interdisciplinary basic conception of therapeutical and counselling institutions with a great variety of different support programmes under one roof
- mutual adjustment and coordination of programmes and a stronger cooperation between the different support services to meet the customers' needs
- extending local, easily accessible support programmes

[17] Concrete measures could be (Mayr 1997; 1998):

- presence of therapeutical professional services, nearby or directly in the regular institutions (kindergarten or school)
- organizational coordination of these systems
- developing common, topically harmonized concepts of work, i.e. interlocking therapeutical and pedagogical measures

context of containing risks of children and families[18], [19].

Prevention: The existing longitudinal studies have proved that it is possible to break efficiently through causal chains of effects between early developmental disturbances and later problems by early support and prevention programmes (cf. for a survey: Farran,1990; Price et al., 1989; Weissberg et al., 1991; Zigler et al., 1992). Well-conceived prevention programmes for preschool age can contribute to decrease juvenile delinquency among certain high-risk groups by 50%. In addition to that model calculations prove that early intervention measures are much less expensive in comparison with intervention measures taken at a later age during youth. The following factors are decisive for effective prevention on a long-term basis: (1) Intervention at an early stage[20]; (2) Continuity of interventions[21]; (3) manifold integration of early support programmes; i.e. integration of the programmes into every-day life and the different environments of children and related to this (4) taking environment and ecological factors much more into account[22]. Last but not least (5) focussing the interest of intervention on target groups who are especially at risk.

Knowledge transfer into practice: At present there is a wide gap between theoretical research and practice as far as early diagnosis, prevention and intervention with

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18 Screening studies in regular institutions on a regular basis and qualifying staff are central elements for an effective early diagnosis strategy. Attending kindergarten is a key situation for early diagnosis of developmental problems. For many children attending kindergarten is the first time that they step out of the private environment of their family and it is often the first opportunity for parents to compare their child with other children and to listen to professional assessments of their child's abilities and behaviour. The presence of professional services in kindergartens clearly improves the quality of early diagnosis, because filter effects can be excluded.

19 Developing efficient and practice-proof screening procedures for parents and educators is an important prerequisite for improving early diagnosis measures.

20 Patterns of problems regarding both children and their adult person of reference are the more difficult to influence the longer they have existed

21 Short-term intervention programmes may have impressive effects: however, as a rule, they do not last very long. That is why integrated, interconnected interventions accompanying the child through different stages of its development, are required. What is extremely important is to offer support for coping with transitions (e.g. transition from kindergarten to school).

22 It is not enough to count exclusively on influencing a child's behaviour. This must be parallelled by changes in the family and institutional environment of the child and it is important to strenghten the natural function of support of these systems.

developmental disturbances is concerned. Meanwhile there is considerable new knowledge available as a result of international research in this field. There are numerous new methods and instruments at our disposal to help children and families at risk in a better way than before. However this knowledge does not reach sufficiently or reaches too late the persons and institutions responsible for the implementation of such methods.[23] Instead, in practice intervention approaches are spreading, which are often completely disengaged from research results and do not live up to the current standards in any way.

Research and science in different countries have to infer from this that on the one hand they have to deal more intensively with the question of how to make the results of research projects known for people working in practice and how to put them into practice in the field more efficiently. A second consequence should be that national research projects give themselves a more international orientation and try to build an international network to exchange results with other countries and benefit from them for their own work.

b) Intercultural education as a reality in Europe

Migration in the past, currently and in the future has continuously been changing the shape of Europe or rather the different shapes of Europe. European integration, teaching European citizenship, internationalization of public and private life have been taking place in the context of societies which traditionally have been neither monocultural nor monolingual. Migration and the future of Europe are connected and require a new approach in the educational and political field[24].

Affirming a European dimension in education is based on a concept of Europe as a manifold continent, including migration, ethnic groups and diversity (Luchtenberg 1996). European identity does not mean imposing elements of a national state ideology on Europe in order to conjure up a new secluded unity by looking back on an alleged-

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23 Results of an extensive study show that in Germany research projects and research results in practical early childhood education are hardly identified as such or are hardly taken notice of (Fthenakis et al., 1996).

24 First of all, the close coexistence and cooperation of different languages and cultures has to be accepted as a matter-of-course and should not be perceived as an exception.

ly common cultural heritage. However, the idea of Europe is rather future-orientated in the sense of developing multi-cultural societies and basic democratic rights and chances of participation.[25] Such a development need not automatically be opposed to a sound cultural identity on a national level, an argument often used against cultural open-mindedness.

What are the basic competences and attitudes that future generations need to learn in our educational system? The most important among these are: cultural openmindedness, competence of dealing with foreign cultures, command of several languages, international perspective, education of human rights and peace education.

I should like to expand in this context only on the concept of cultural open-mindedness and the related dimension of competence of dealing with foreign cultures:

Key competence cultural open-mindedness: Intercultural education always characterizes a process affecting different groups. Its first and foremost aim is communication and a natural exchange between different cultural and linguistic groups. Thus, intercultural matters never have a static but a dynamic character including interactions, activities and perspectives of actions. The topical focus of intercultural education is the development of cultural open-mindedness, zest for learning and "competence of dealing with foreign cultures"[26].

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[25] The educational aims are as follows:

- the daily confrontation with foreign languages should become natural for children and should be looked upon as an opportunity to learn new things.
- while encountering a "different culture" and different forms of exchange should become natural for children, simultaneously the "different culture" should be accepted and respected and children should become aware of their own perspective
- children should develop an awareness of different forms of discrimination and racism

[26] Intercultural education has to fulfill a difficult double function: On the one hand it is supposed to gradually remove tendencies of distance and dissociation and to give some training in cooperating naturally. On the other hand intercultural communication also means intercultural respect and an awareness of the coexistence of <u>different</u> cultures. Respect in this context means acknowledging the different culture as an independent entity, no matter whether there is real "understanding". For it is not only indifference or opposition that "foreigners" are offended by, but it is also a friendly encroachment on the different culture and pretending to understand and know everything about it, that can appear as condescending.

It is a prerequisitve for the respect of different cultures that one can accept not

A key metaphor predominant in the media and in educational settings is the image of children torn between two worlds and exposed to daily cultural conflicts (Ulich 1994, Ulich in press). Some migrant children as well as some children of the dominating culture learn how to live in different worlds. This is part of their identity, of their difficulties and of their special competences. Nowadays we can no longer rely on uniform spaces and identities void of fragmentation. A monolingual child also moves between totally different systems: his/her grandmother, his/her stepfamily and his/her natural father.

The competence of dealing sucessfully with different worlds and of coping with transitions from one cultural system to another is a key competence today and it is an ability, which self-confident bicultural and bilingual children are particularly good at developing. We will only make it more difficult for these children to develop this ability, if we concentrate on their cultural conflicts and unconsciously suggest that we can or should only live in a uniform world. We need a concept of cultural identity admitting contradictions.

Conceiving multicultural education in such a way implies a number of educational-political consequences (obligations and responsibilities for educational authorities and experts): only some of them can be outlined here:

1. Offical commitment for intercultural education and official acknowledgement of the "normality" of multilingual and mulitcultural societies and groups.

   There is still a gap between family and regular institutions regarding the educator's expectations and behaviour towards migrant children.

   In research literature this is referred to as monolingual perspective on bilingual

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to understand other ways of life. This requires tolerance of ambiguity and the ability of thinking in different perspectives. "Competence of dealing with different cultures" means considering one's own perspective as one view among many other possible views. As a consequence differences will no longer be denied, but there will be a growing awareness to common questions and problems each of them looked upon under a <u>different</u> angle (Jakubeit/Schattenhofer 1996).

children (Baker, 1996; Grosjean 1985)[27]. In my opinion it is essential to give up this monolingual view and to make the existence and appreciation of different languages in a group of children transparent for both children and educators. Acknowledging multilinguality in schools and kindergartens as a normality and as an opportunity to learn requires a radical reevaluation of the teacher's role and function, which nowadays are still basically defined as monolingual[28]. The "International Association for Intercultural Education", which is very active in the Netherlands, has implemented important work in this field.

2. Attending kindergarten as a right and an educational chance available for all children

Firstly, this means: accessibility for all children irrespective of their nationality, religion or political status (this includes refugees and applicants for political asylum)

Secondly, this means: Encouraging the attendance of kindergarten by all children by means of carefully directed actions in socially underprivileged areas. Migrant children are still disproportionately represented in kindergartens in several countries. The commitment for equality of chances in the sense of accessiblity should be complemented by a commitment for active integration and promotion of migrant children. In countries such as the Netherlands or Luxembourg the situation of migrant children has been a reason for lowering compulsory school age and for introducing compulsory preschool. The integrative function of preschool is also frequently discussed in Portugal in connection with children at risk and migrant children.

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[27] This perspective implies a number of expectations regarding the children's language. Perfect language is expected. In language tests the language competence of bilingual children and multilingual children is usually only tested in one language and the level of their command of one language is compared to the level of monolingual children. So there is no consideration of the entire language capacity of these children. To put it differently: the bilingual child is expected to be perfect in a partial field and its deficits in this field are concentrated on. A monolingual perspective leads to another expectation: both languages should always be used absolutely separately, mixing two languages is regarded as a big mistake. Thus partially very creative modes of communication in multilingual groups in educational settings are being ignored or negatively sanctioned.

[28] This commitment has to be ensured on the various international, national, regional and local levels and has to affect laws, regulations, guidelines, educational concepts and public relations - and also the self-concept and image of institutions.

3. Interculturally orientated staff policy and supply of resources[29]

4. Intercultural education in every-day life of kindergartens and as an integral part of educators' vocational training and advanced education

Already in 1984 the European Council demanded a revision of the concept of intercultural education: intercultural education was to be neither a special "topic" nor a new "discipline", but a prevailing, consistent principle with practical consequences for the every-day life of educators, children and families. The idea was not to deal with specifically "intercultural" topics, but rather to open up an intercultural perspective on current topics of early childhood education.

5. Comprehensive, integrative concepts for research, prevention and intervention

The situation and development of migrant children has so far been neglected by research. Different areas of interest, which would be relevant in this context, have developed separately, such as: research on migration, longitudinal research on the development of children at risk and research on the relationship between factors of risk and factors of protection, educationally and psychologically well-conceived models of prevention, early diagnosis, intervention and intercultural education. A scientifically well-founded intercultural educational research should attempt to integrate these different approaches.

Longitudinal studies have shown that short-term promotion and intervention programmes hardly have any long-term effects. Instead, it is more efficient to accompany the different stages families, children and youths go through. In the Netherlands programmes for migration families have been developed. These

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[29] This requires:

- Employing bilingual professional educators, even if they are not of the same religion as the dominant culture
- supply of mobile, specially trained professional services, who can support educators to systematically observe and promote children with special needs within regular institutions - as a part of a regular social service, professionally trained for questions of migration.

programmes first aimed at the stage of preschool, but later they were extended to the entire period of childhood and youth.

And last but not least

6. Development and consistent implementation of reliable and valid criteria and methods for evaluation in practice[30].

c) Continuities versus discontinuities: Coping with transitions

Family psychology research and educational research take a growing interest in the phases of individual and familial development called transitions. They can be defined as phases of accelerated development, accompanied by a number of psychological changes whose direction is uncertain. Individual features, familial factors and also contextual factors are decisive for coping with these changes (cf. table).

Transition from after the birth of a first or second child, transition to post-divorce family and to remarried family are popular topics in family research. The problem of "Empty-Nest", transition to old age pensioner, widowhood are also being conceptualized by help of the transition approach. In European and in international educational research and as a consequence of daycare for children at a very early age there has recently been a growing interest in facilitating the transition from family to kindergarten and from kindergarten to school (Kagan & Neuman, 1998). Early Childhood Education has so far paid more attention to the concept of continuity than to the concept of discontinuity, particularly the concept of transition-related discontinuity. Recent research results proved that children who fail to cope effectively with transitions are in danger of being unsuccessful at school, of having difficulties in making friends and of being more prone to psychic problems. It was only after these results became known that transition-related discontinuities became a topic of interest in research.

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[30] Especially in the field of intercultural education and integration of minorities a great number of programmatic and socially desirable aims have been formulated, which often do not come up to practical needs. The current discussion about decentralization and regionalization has to include the issue of developing quality and ensuring quality in regions with a high proportion of ethnic minorities.

Source	Characteristic
INDIVIDUAL	- Good intellectual functioning - Appealing, sociable, easygoing disposition - Self-efficacy, self-confidence, high self-esteem - Talents - Faith
FAMILY	- Close relationship to caring pa rent figure - Authoritative parenting: warmth, structure, high expectations - Socioeconomic advantages - Connections to extended suppor tive family networks
EXTRAFAMILIAL CONTEXT	- Bonds to prosocial adults outside the family - Connections to prosocial organi sations - Attending effective kindergartens or schools

Kagan & Neuman have recently published a survey on the latest results of transition research and the Journal of Elementary Education has dedicated its spring volume to this topic. Transitions from family to kindergarten and from kindergarten to school have been conceptualized by means of the transition-approach and have been studied empirically in two field surveys in our institute during the last years. It is possible to apply this approach to other transitions, such as the transition to one-parent family or transition to a new lingual and cultural system caused by migration. In the last three decades the lives of children have been characterized by increasing discontinuities. Therefore it is absolutely important for modern Early Childhood Education not only to rely on continuities, but also to be concerned with the chances to learn, which discontinuities offer. So there are projects in the USA, such as the "Early Childhood Transition Demonstration Project", the "Head Start Transition Project" in connection with the "National Transition Study", which represent prototypes in a set of programmes, in which transitions strategies have been implemented successfully. The "National

Transition Study" attempted to prove the positive effects preschool programmes for disadvantaged children have on their transition to elementary school and on their elementary school years. At present transition theories are influencing intervention research and its different fields, like transition to parenthood, (Cowan & Cowan, 1992, 1994; Fthenakis & Eckert, 1997), transition to family of divorce, and transition to remarried family (Fthenakis, in press), transition to widowhood (Silverman, 1989) and a lot of other transitions (cf. Wagner & Bond, 1989). We should profit from transition research and use it to teach children coping strategies for transitions in individual and family developmental processes and in the educational system. These phases also provide opportunities for all educators to indicate at a very early stage, if children have problems with coping with transitions. Phases of transitions in individual and family developmental processes as well as transitions in lingual and cultural contexts can be both a reason for a child's insufficient adaptation and a medium by which a child's problems can be highlighted. Besides, transitions represent suitable periods in which the child and the family system are open and susceptible to interventions. Indeed, this opens up a totally new field of research, which contains new chances for early childhood education.

It is of major importance for the future of European societies as of any society, that children develop into sound, productive and competent members of society. The knowledge of processes and factors favouring a positive and sound development of our children has gained importance in research during the last years. Related problems have been studied empirically, especially regarding those children struggling with specific difficulties and forced to cope with impediments, like with their parents' divorce, sexual abuse, poverty and, most extremely, with war. However, it has been found that those children do not break down under these difficulties, but develop competences and strategies of coping with such contexts of strain. Resilience research has substantially contributed to give answers to these questions. Pioneers in this field have concluded that these children possibly have good strategies at their disposal to reduce risks, cope with them sucessfully and to develop competences, to make the problem take a good turn. Thus, resilience research has been concerned with the question which competences children have to be taught to help them grow up resiliently. Joseph (1994) has developed a concept, which aims at promoting resilience in children. Masten & Coatsworth (1998) have recently published approaches for the development of competence in favourable and unfavourable environments with the subtitle "Lessons from Research on Successful Children". They illustrate how the relationship-system (Carlson & Scroufe, 1994; Masten, 1995) or the system of self-

regulation (Cicceti & Tucker, 1994; Rothbart & Bates, 1998), which are decisive for the development of competence, can be strengthened by early educational approaches. They have summarized the characteristics leading to a resilient development in a table and differentiate between individual, familial and extrafamilial characteristics. Joseph (1994) also shows ways how to promote certain competences in children, like for instance self-knowledge, empathy and the ability of taking the right decisions, and he also gives advice how to develop competences in educators to cope with children and their various and sometimes difficult characters.

During the last years early education concepts have concentrated too much on the situation or "programme" and too little on the child and its development. One of the most remarkable results of a recent American longitudinal study, the NICHD study, is that early education, which is organized according to such traditional principles, can predict only a small proportion of a child's developmental variance (Clarke-Stewart, 1997; Fthenakis, 1998). Only considering contextual factors improved results.

Following the results of resilience research and empirical quality research (Fthenakis & Textor, 1998) we should expand the focus of intervention in early education: There is a need to strenghten children's competences much more in order to help them cope with transitions and difficulties in their lives without being harmed. Besides, contextual factors have to be taken into account much more than before, which means that early education intervention has to be extended beyond institutional settings so that contextual educational and developmental conditions will be improved.

Examples for an extended approach of early childhood intervention are attempts of reevaluating fathers' roles and of developing extended concepts of fatherhood and motherhood (Fthenakis, in press). The intervention approaches of the Reggio Emilia pedagogy try to help fathers to get more involved in innerfamilial duties, as well as fighting poverty, social exclusion, discrimination, but also approaches trying to develop an environment favourable to the child.

Both approaches, i.e. strengthening children's competences and optimizing educational and developmental contexts, represent an enormous challenge for early childhood education and the prevention of children's maladjustments.

Except from discussing the conceptualisation of quality, we have to discuss structural questions of the organisation of the educational process.

Trends and current questions in daycare in Europe

A recently published study of our institute on daycare institutions and vocational training in the EU-countries (Oberhuemer/Ulich 1997a; 1997b) has shown how intricately social and educational policy discussions are bound up with the particular historical development and the current situation in the different EU-countries. However, some common tendencies and problem areas can be filtered out, which are being discussed with a different focus in all EU-countries and which are also relevant to children at risk.

First I should like to outline the different types of institutions:

Institutions - coverage rates and objectives

During the last 30 years there has been a remarkable expansion of institutions for children from the age of three until school age in all EU- countries. Today in almost all countries it is taken for granted that four- and five-year-old children attend kindergarten, at least for some hours a day. Depending on the current situation there is a tendency to expand the capacity of kindergartens to take on younger children (e.g in Germany and Spain for three-year-olds, in France and Belgium for two-year-olds).

In several countries there are only few daycare places available for children under the age of 2 and a half years and three years which are financed by the public sector. The pressure of demand has eased up since maternity and educational leave has been prolonged in several countries, yet, as a rule, demand still clearly outweighs supply. In numerous countries a new concept of a more pedagogically oriented form of education is being discussed which is meant to replace the hitherto paramedically or child care orientated concept. This tendency is accompanied by a growing interest in flexible systems, which meet the various needs of working parents and their children. Some of the frequently expressed demands are: the support of private initiatives by the public sector, public regulation and the promotion and upgrading of family day care.

In many countries experts are criticizing the shortage of supply of daycare institutions for schoolchildren after regular school hours and the lack of qualified staff in these

institutions[31]. Only a few countries such as France, Belgium, Sweden and Denmark have provisions which approximately meets the demand[32]. Few countries offer professional training for qualifications in this field. Sweden and Denmark are the only countries in which professional vocational training (comparable to university level) is available for staff in daycare institutions.

Different points of intersection between preschool and school systems - different types of institutions

Currently there is a controversial discussion underway in a number of countries about the "appropriate" age for starting school and compulsory school age. In this context another issue is the type of education offered to 4 to 6-year-old children. In the majority of the EU-countries compulsory school age is 6 years. In some countries, for instance in Portugal, there is a discussion on lowering compulsory school age in view of equality for all children and to do justice to children of risk families, who are disproportionally represented in pre-school education. In Luxembourg a debate on children at risk led to the introduction of compulsory pre-school age at age four in 1992. In countries with a compulsory school age of 7 years, like in Sweden, pilot programmes for school entry at 6 are underway. In Finland compulsory school age remains at 7 years, but specific models for the education of 5 and 6-year-olds in schools or kindergartens have been introduced.

These different points of intersection between preschool and school systems have led to different types of institutions. Basically, these can be divided into two categories:

Type A represents the educational institution primarily defined as preschool or preparatory school (partly starting at the age of 4) [33].

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31 Especially for the group of children at risk daycare groups in the afternoon and programmes for leisure activities are important meeting places.

32 It is frequently private initiatives (partly subsidized by the state) that have to supply for to the growing demand of places in kindergartens.

33 Quality in this context means among other things:
- Equality of opportunities by means of a virtually 100% and free-of-charge care;

Type B stands for a kindergarten system, which is topically and administratively separated from the school system[34].

In Germany, where kindergartens and daycare institutions can be classified as Type B, the following questions are at issue:

- Is equality at stake, if children at risk are disproportionately represented in institutions, if there is not enough supply in some areas or if poorer or unemployed parents are deterred by the fees?

- With diversification and regionalisation on the increase, how can we make sure that no system of first- and second-class daycare institution will emerge?

- Who is responsible for the operationalization and evaluation of impalpable quality criteria like "creating a network" or "family-orientated education"?

Creating a network through cooperation with local institutions

How can daycare institutions come up to their double mandate emerging more and more clearly? On the one hand they are to offer educational chances for children, on the other hand they are to represent a service for families with different needs, expectations and starting positions. How can a balance between these two tasks be ensured in the best possible way? And how can institutions trying to fulfill this double function

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- Preparation for school with a smooth transition from play-based to systematic learning;
- nationally uniform standards of quality

[34] Quality in this context is associated with

- education complementing family education and family-related, social pedagogical education;
- a variety of interconnected offers for different age groups and needs;
- a definition related to regions and families.

devote sufficient energy to the preventive aspect, i.e. the identification and support of children with special needs? Daycare institutions are not yet in all countries institutions available for all children, irrespective of their economic, social and cultural situation and irrespective of the political status of their family[35].

In Germany at the moment there is a growing interest in mulitfunctional institutions, i.e. institutions combining in a more efficient way educational and social work, psycho-social and health prevention measures, prevention as well as programmes accompanying and supporting families.

An interwoven way of thinking and acting implies among other things: to cooperate with local institutions in order to strengthen children and families at risk in their special life circumstances [36].

Qualifying staff

A multi-functional character of daycare institutions confronts daycare staff with particularly complex demands (Oberhuemer & Ulich 1997a). Does vocational training and advanced education adequately prepare educators for these tasks? Developing network approaches in cooperation with local institutions, social services and self-help associations in the region as well as getting involved in local and regional planning processes will be an increasingly important task in the future[37].

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35 Every child should have access to a place in a kindergarten meeting the quality standards. Especially for children coming from underprivileged family backgrounds this is a decisive factor.

36 There are different levels of cooperation, e.g. in the sense of

- an expansion of resources for the educational work in the group,
- preventive and therapeutical help for some children and their families,
- qualifying staff by professional training,
- municipal political lobbying for children, e.g. by committee work, integration into the socio-regional planning of youth welfare work.

Additionally it should be considered, how kindergartens can strengthen the mutual self-help potential of parents.

37 It is important to analyze aims and forms of quality critically while continually exchanging results with educators in practice. In this context interdisciplinary approaches, which combine early childhood education with approaches of social pedagogy, social work, health education etc. will gain importance. Disciplines like communication sciences, adult education, organisational development,

In numerous EU-countries decentralization, region-related planning of supply or structures of supply and "customer-centered", needs-orientated diversification of supply are being discussed (Oberhuemer & Ulich 1998). While in some countries decentralization is associated with participation and supply tailored to meet the specific needs, in other countries it is associated with quotas of supply and with standards which are dictated by principles of the free market, i.e. standards which vary regionally and whose quality is not ensured. In countries like the Netherlands some political circles support decentralization in the sense of making the daycare system for 0-4-year-old children compatible with the principles of the free market. Their motto is: a greater variety of supply so that parents have more options; customer-centered supply adapted to the specific needs. On the other hand experts are criticizing the lack of commitment by the state and they demand that the state should take on stronger responsibilities, that means that the day care system should be centrally regulated by the state. Similar reasoning can be observed (for the sector of 0-4 year-olds) in Ireland and Great Britain. In these countries this problem especially affects the situation of children at risk. Until now these children were treated as a special group and looked after in day nurseries run by the social and health authorities. As these institutions (and other publically financed) institutions do not have sufficient capacity, there has been a remarkable expansion of privately financed (expensive) institutions in Great Britain: it is reported that there has been an increase of 500% during the last 10 years (Penn 1995, S. 30). As a consequence of this development for families the gap between the possibility of affording these institutions and accessibility is widening.

To sum up, strategies for quality assurance - especially for children from families at risk - have to be discussed and implemented in the light of prevailing national and regional policies in the different European countries.

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leadership competence and social management should also be part of vocational training and advanced education.

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